

THE LABOUR ORGANISER

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Topics of the Month

WILL the General Election come in May? This is a question which we put forward quite seriously, and to

which the only answer at the moment is, "Quite probably—be prepared." We have always believed that if the present Government ran its full term history would repeat itself, and as in 1922 our ammunition so carefully prepared for an unpopular enemy would be found out-of-date in face of a quick change in the alignment of our enemies. We do not believe a "National" Government will appeal to the electors in 1936 any more than a Coalition Government did in 1922. But there are other possibilities, and a rise in the "National" stock might precipitate an appeal that it would be dangerous otherwise to delay. Can this change be brought about?

Quite frankly we believe that provided there is no untoward happening abroad in the next six months a General Election may be upon us in May. The signs and portents are too many to be ignored. First, take the Budget. A surplus of £35,000,000 is freely spoken of; it is even suggested in some quarters that the surplus may reach £50,000,000. When, in recent recollection, has there been such an opportunity for a "popular" budget—popular in the sense that long-demanded tax reductions can be made to Tory supporters and a quite substantial sum still be left over to restore wage cuts and modify unemployed pay? Can the Prime Minister, having already profited by one May election, resist the gift the gods give him of another perhaps never-to-return opportunity? Then there are the trade, unemployment and employment figures. The present improvement is, we believe, merely one of the "ups" in the up and down movement of the trade barometer which,

it seems, is just as characteristic of the present phase of changing or evolving capitalism as it was a feature of the purer capitalism of pre-war days. We believe the upward movement will continue, and the downward movement may not be due for two or three years. We do not believe that MacDonald has so far forgotten the phenomena he studied as a Socialist as not to perceive these trends and the lesson they carry for him to profit while the going is good.

And the very fact that nothing untoward happens abroad will help the Government in two directions. The "strong Government" business, and peace for the time being, will satisfy heaps of people otherwise opposed to risky policies abroad. While at the same time the fire-eaters can be satisfied out of the Budget surplus. Tory policy next spring may well satisfy the great bulk of both Liberal and Tory voters. Our question is, "What will the harvest be?" And it is perhaps a little unfortunate that just as this big risk comes along Labour is not concentrating on the expectation of an early election, but on a campaign to last for a year or two. Hastings did not contemplate a Budget surplus of fifty million pounds!

The Labour Party Membership Cards for 1934 are now on sale—heliotrope for women and a primrose card for men. We most earnestly hope that no financial stringency, however urgent, will stand in the way of Divisional Labour Parties procuring the new cards immediately. Not only is this a necessity in order to regularise the position of every individual member in the Division, but the absence of the new cards imposes a distinct handicap on every ward or Local Labour Party, and is bound to result in loss. In a circular from Head Office, Local Parties are reminded that "a person shall not be deemed to be an individual member

of the Labour Party or of this Party (i.e., the Divisional or Local Party) unless he or she possesses a membership card for the current year." What then, is to be the position of members after the 1st January if no cards have reached the Division, or if an insufficient supply has been obtained? The importance of effective and immediate filtration of the cards throughout the Division cannot be overstretched. In the past sufficient attention has not been paid to this matter, and Divisional Parties have awaited applications or remittances from their local units, whereas it is the duty of the Divisional L.P. to examine the necessities in the first place, and to make adequate arrangements for the supply and payment of the cards. We also desire once again to urge the importance of either overprinting or rubber-stamping with local information the cards as received from Head Office. This, of course, takes time, and Local Parties may desire to add information of their own. Altogether then, this matter cannot be dealt with too early for the time already is very short.

Excellent news! The "Daily Express" has lost a quarter of a million of its circulation during the last four months. The certified sales of the "Daily Express" in June last amounted to 2,054,348 copies per day. The net sale for the month of November was 1,775,000 copies per day. We do not conceal our delight that the "Daily Express" has been worsted in the circulation war. Is there not an obvious connection between the rising tide of Labour in the constituencies and these figures? As we have before pointed out everything points to a return to sanity on the part of the British electorate. The "Daily Express" takes its licking with ill grace. It strives to explain away its defeat by stating that the "Daily Herald" has not relaxed its efforts or greatly diminished its canvassing strength. Why should it? If the "Daily Herald" can still pile on new readers that is all to the good. The "Daily Express" further confesses that during the month of November it spent £24,301 on door-to-door canvassing for new readers. We are sorry for the canvassers. In our opinion Labour folk have a duty to perform in exposing the tricks of the Capitalist press day by day, year

in and year out. If this work is adequately done the disparity in the circulation of Labour's only daily and its rivals will continue to grow and newspaperdom will be cleaner and better as a result.

More by-election results have been declared since our last issue, but no further gain has been recorded. Taking the results in the lump there is considerable encouragement, for Labour's vote continues to grow, while the slump in the "National" vote reaches new records. But the signs have, as yet, given no cause for complacency. Given a General Election to-morrow we believe Labour would surpass all previous records. It might poll 9,000,000 votes, but we doubt if the 10,000,000 mark would be surpassed. Given some measure of the luck Labour had in 1929 a majority is just possible, but in our view extremely doubtful. It is just as well to plainly state these opinions, because an enormous work has yet to be accomplished, and, as we infer above, it is our enemies who can choose the moment for the conflict. Further, there is little doubt that unless Labour looks out it will again be on the defensive when the election comes. In recent by-elections the enemy has sought to raise a scare based on the speeches of certain Labour people. Whatever may be said of these speeches we desire to point out once again that explaining away what somebody has said is not half so profitable as full-blooded attack on the policies of the Government and concentration on a few of Labour's most vital proposals. The old game of trapping Labour into being on the defensive must not be allowed to be played again. Labour has this matter largely in its own hands after all. If it secures terrific concentration on the points we have mentioned in speeches and in literature, the field of battle must change to our own chosen ground.

To all our readers
A Merry Christmas
 and
A Prosperous New Year

May Your Campaigns Prosper

The Victory for Socialism Campaign

THE BIGGEST PUSH EVER

The great "Victory for Socialism Campaign," approved by the National Conference of the Party at Hastings, is shortly to be launched. It will be the biggest ever.

Circulars have already been sent out to Divisional Labour Parties outlining the plan of the campaign, and calling on all sections of the Movement to partake in it. During the campaign at least £50,000 is to be raised and spent, and the whole forces of Labour are to be mobilised in this great crusade.

The actual date for the commencement is comparatively near at hand.

The National E.C. stipulated that it would be necessary to raise £5,000 in advance for the purpose of covering preliminary preparations, and this itself is some indication of the gigantic nature of the supreme effort for victory which the Movement is being called upon to make. We have reason to believe that the initial sum asked for has not yet been raised, but that hopes run high in this direction. Is there any reader of the "Labour Organiser" with five, ten or fifty pounds to spare who can hasten the opening day?

What the Campaign Means.

The central aim of this great effort is to carry Socialism's inspiring message into every home in the land; to conduct a sustained campaign of intensive propaganda and educational effort on a mass scale—a campaign not of isolated and unconnected efforts, but of organised and co-ordinated activities with the combined driving power of the whole of Labour's forces behind it.

The object of the campaign is the achievement of power. The policy of the campaign is that of Labour's policy of peace and planned economic reorganisation.

Trades Union Co-operation.

Every endeavour is to be made during the campaign to bring Trades Union Branches into direct co-operation with Constituency Labour Parties. The National Conference, representing nearly two million Trade Unionists, has endorsed this campaign, and National E.C.'s of affiliated Trades Unions are to be invited dur-

ing the course of the campaign to influence and encourage their branches into active association with it.

Trades Union co-operation will also be sought by enlisting its personal leadership; by invitations to distribute documents in the Branches; and by endeavours to keep members of Trades Unions informed of the progress of the campaign.

The Method of Attack.

Essentially the "Victory for Socialism Campaign" is a huge attempt to carry conviction to the minds of the electors by a long sustained and thoroughly organised house to house distribution of literature throughout the whole country. The written word is to supplement and made to crown all the years of platform propaganda which Labour has indulged in. Incidentally, to be successful this campaign must be accompanied by a striking attempt on the part of the Local Parties to improve and readjust their local machines to the nature of the task—an accomplishment which, if successful will bring the accompanying benefits of closer contacts with the electors and make the machine more efficient when the election comes.

But this is not all. The campaign is to be accompanied by a powerful platform effort. Every constituency will have an allocation of speakers. There will be panels of speakers, apart from those nationally allocated, to whom Constituency Parties may apply for platform assistance.

Besides the ordinary indoor meetings and demonstrations there are to be great district rallies—real mass demonstrations. In every direction efforts are to be made to ginger up the holding of outdoor meetings in streets and public places.

Loudspeaker vans will probably be enlisted in this campaign, though much will depend on the extent to which Labour's great vote responds financially to this great call for victory.

What D.L.P.'s Must Do.

As stated above, literature in every home is the essence of the campaign. In its message the National E.C. say: "We are thinking in terms of millions of convinced Socialists and our or-

ganised activities must be in proportion to our aims."

It is declared that the National E.C. and Party Headquarters are ready to throw themselves wholeheartedly into the work of planning the victory campaign. This will mean much to Divisional Parties who, at first sight, may be staggered with the suggestion that they are asked to purchase and distribute thirty-five shillings worth of literature house-to-house, month by month. And, of course, this work is in addition to that of locally organising the platform campaign.

We understand that it is free distribution of literature that is intended, and as the details of the campaign are still being worked out, and replies being received from Divisional Labour Parties, it is impossible yet to give an indication of the nature and extent of the literature supplies. We have every confidence however, that the literature to be distributed is to be of the up-to-date and vastly improved nature which has characterised more recent Party publications; that the needs of particular types of constituencies are likely to be considered, and that effectiveness for conversion will be a prime consideration.

The actual number of leaflets supplied will bear relation to the cost of same, and if the campaign is taken up as indications foretell, the cost per thousand is likely to be less—perhaps substantially less — than the normal cost of Party leaflets.

What Will Your Party Do?

So far as we are able to gauge at present the reactions of Parties who have given a preliminary consideration to the campaign have been various, but by no means discouraging. The very nature and the gigantic preparations necessary for the campaign have, in the first place almost stunned certain Parties, particularly those — and they are many — in straitened circumstances.

But as the idea of the campaign and its immense portent on the future of Democracy in this country has been brought home to delegates we have observed a reaction to this campaign which augurs well. What is apparent at once is that in dozens of constituencies something must now be done to raise money for this special effort. And that task won't be so hard as it looks. Here is a scheme unparalleled in its audacity, but in which value for value is to be returned to Divisional

Parties at every stage. Was there ever a sounder ground on which appeal could be made to supporters for special contributions?

Appeals for money may have been made before, but surely never in such a nation-wide cause, and for such a supreme call.

Another consideration which will soon enter into the heads of many Parties is that some modification of existing expenditure and organising effort will be called for in order that all effort may be put into the campaign. This may mean in some constituencies that the cost of the campaign to them, i.e., £21 per year (only £21 a year) may not be altogether an additional cost. There will be savings in some directions. It is pertinent to ask how many constituencies there are which could *not* raise an additional £21 per year if this cause and its implications are adequately and enthusiastically placed before Labour supporters.

And now for the first steps. Secure a discussion — better still a special conference of the Divisional Party and ensure that the form printed below is sent to the Head Office of the Party. A mere resolution however, to enter the campaign will not be enough.

Every Party which joins the campaign must immediately review its resources in man and women power, and its capacity to cover its area with regular distribution month by month. This matter is vital to the whole campaign.

Local Party and Ward meetings will be necessary everywhere. Special steps may be necessary to mobilise the membership and to procure more volunteers for distribution. Captains will be required and supervisors of captains. Indeed what is called for is the election machine in full operation, and if the man and woman power is at present too little something must be done to enrol those among our voters who would gladly engage in work of this sort.

Finally, the "Labour Organiser" calls upon its readers for a genuine, whole-hearted and inspiring response to this campaign. Maybe the General Election will come sooner than some expect, but however short the period may be intensive work such as the victory campaign envisages cannot but have tremendous effect upon the poll.

And if there be special circumstances
(Please turn to page 222.)

Reinforcements now appearing

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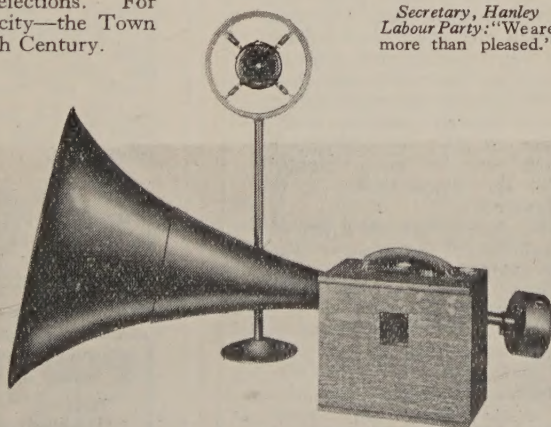
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stances or peculiar difficulties in any constituency, please don't sulk. Financial difficulties or any other problems which may hinder or apparently prevent the participation of any Party in this campaign should be fully and frankly explained to the Head Office or its officers so that something can be done, and we assure our readers that something is intended.

Mr. G. R. Shepherd, the National Agent of the Labour Party has addressed meetings of agents on the "Victory for Socialism Campaign" as follows: London, November 30th; Midlands Area (Birmingham), December 6th; North-Western Area (Manchester), December 8th. At each meeting the information and advice given by Mr. Shepherd was highly appreciated by his hearers.

"VICTORY FOR SOCIALISM" CAMPAIGN

Special Literature Scheme

To The Secretary,
The Labour Party,
Transport House,
Smith Square,
London, S.W.1

DEAR SIR,

The Executive Committee of the Divisional Labour Party have given consideration to your Circular Letter—V.C. No. 1 of November. They welcome the proposed Campaign, and will participate in the Special Literature Scheme on the basis of a monthly contribution of 35s. — payment of which will be made monthly from the inauguration of the Campaign.

We shall be obliged if you will inform us in due course when you propose to issue the first monthly supply of literature.

Yours sincerely,

Name

Address

Organisation

Date

POINTED PARS.

Readers in search of first-rate propaganda matter should not fail to keep by them and use Willie Leach's masterly recital of the Government's failures, which he makes in 41 points in an article published in "Forward," dated November 25th.

Once again we should like to urge our readers to make enquiries concerning the loud-speaker apparatus advertised in this issue. This is "It"; the price is right and so are the terms. No election will henceforth be really "fought" without a loud-speaker, and the uses to which it can be put meantime in or out of halls are simply manifold. Write to-day and mention the "L.O."

During a time of unparalleled trade depression and great unemployment, the Co-operative Movement actually increased the number of workers on its pay roll from 263,037 in 1931 to 265,865 at the end of 1932, an increase of nearly 3,000.

When it is recalled that, virtually, all these workers are Trade Unionists in receipt of at least the recognised Trade Union rate, one realises that the Co-operative Movement is making a practical contribution to the alleviation of a terrible problem.

The Co-operative Movement started the current year with a retail membership of 6,760,432, as compared with 6,590,020 in the previous year. This means that after full allowance has been made for all withdrawals, deaths, etc., there was a net increase of 170,412 members, an advance of more than 2½ per cent. on the previous year.

This huge increase is all the more remarkable because it follows similar sensational reinforcements in recent years. Since 1928 Co-operation has gained a net increase of a million members.

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FILMSLIDES.

Another Aid to Up-to-Date Propaganda.

Our readers' attention is specially drawn to the advertisement of the Visual Information Service which appears on another page in this issue.

Some of our friends are doubtless familiar with the filmslides in other connections, but local Labour Parties have here presented to them a hitherto neglected but nevertheless most forcible and effective method of "getting the message over."

The use of lanterns for the illustration of Labour propaganda points has never been on a scale commensurate with the effectiveness of such devices, but the substitution of non-inflammable film for the glass slides which we have known from childhood, opens up a wide field for specialised illustration, the effectiveness of which is only limited by the ingenuity and originality of the user.

The Unit Lantern is *portable* — about the size of a small suitcase. If

a self-contained battery model is used the outfit is independent of outside lighting connections, and can therefore be used *in the street* for outdoor meetings and demonstrations, in ill-lit village halls—in short, anywhere. We must leave to the imagination of our readers what this means by way of securing and holding good audiences in all sorts of places and sowing good seed.

Filmslides of stock subjects are obtainable at 1d. per picture, the pictures being printed on short lengths of film which go through the post and are otherwise easily manageable without fear of breakage.

Better still, your own pictures — or short lengths of your own pictures added to more general series. Local slum conditions, special functions, the May-Day procession, are all capable of reproduction in this way. Obviously the prime use of filmslides for Local Labour Parties is the illustration of suitable educational matter accompanying the remarks of a speaker or lecturer. FilmSlide rolls can be made from all kinds of material, not only

photographs, but from charts, maps, sketches and hand or typewritten notes, even music sheets. Below is a further list of suggested uses supplied by the makers, and we trust our readers will realise that here is an up-to-date weapon designed to defeat that enemy of education—apathy—and to help us to interest and convert the masses.

Elections.—Collecting and advertising meetings—on walls or sides of travelling van, back of banner, poster, etc. Display of slogans, figures, local housing and other conditions, portrait of candidate, etc.

All-the-time Education.—Illustrated talks to already existing groups on Modern Problems, Social History, Economics, etc., etc. Similar, but more general selections for public meetings.

Training. — Collecting material, simplifying statistics, drafting notes, etc., gives opportunities of useful co-operative work. The system has also been used with good effect in Speakers' Classes. Semi-darkness and the fact that there is a picture to describe, helps in overcoming nervousness and lapses of memory.

Recruiting.—Snapshots of Camps, Summer Schools, history of the local movement (portraits, buildings, statistics, festivals, etc.).

Recreation.—Community Singing, Guessing Games, Shadow Shows, Travel Talks, etc. Children's Circles as well as adults'.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED.

The first three months of Hitler's Tyranny — Terror in Brunswick — The Labour and Socialist International, Zurich.

Although unpriced, we presume this pamphlet—which is an official report of a commission of enquiry into the conditions of political prisoners—to be priced at a copper per so. And a damning document it is, albeit that Brunswick is but one small zone in the area of terror. One often wonders, now that British newspapers have apparently combined in a conspiracy of silence whether enough is being done to open the eyes of the people to the bestial ruthlessness of Fascism — still in Italy as well as Germany. We hope this report will have the circulation that a Socialist International report deserves.

"What is Marxism?" By A. L. Williams. Price sixpence. The N.C.L.C. Publishing Co. Ltd., 15, South Hill Park Gardens, N.W.3.

The experience of the author as an N.C.L.C. tutor enables him to explain Marxist theory in a plain and simple fashion which will be appreciated by those who get tired of too many polysyllabic words. The booklet has a chapter on Marx himself, and other chapters on historical materialism and the class struggle, Marxian economics, Marxism and politics, and winds up with a discussion of Revisionism which was born in the German Labour Movement, and which the writer holds has some responsibility for German Labour's collapse years later under the hammer of Hitlerism. Copies of the pamphlet may be had for 7d. post free, 5s. 6d. per dozen, from the N.C.L.C. as above.

"The Plebs Atlas." Drawn by J. F. Horrabin. Price one shilling. N.C.L.C. Publishing Society.

The thanks of the working class movement are due to J. F. Horrabin for making possible a new and revised edition of the "Plebs Atlas." This "Atlas" of 60 maps, with its geographical footnotes to each, is a most illuminating guide to international problems and the activities of the Imperialist States. The map, which shows the growth of Fascism is itself a revelation. Czecho-Slovakia is shown to be a democratic island completely surrounded by a sea of Fascist states, Poland, Germany, Austria and Hungary.

"A Strong Hand at the Helm." By "Vindicator." Price 2s. 6d., stiff boards. Victor Gollancz.

A diverting volume and writ sarcastic. It is equally divertingly illustrated, and consists of a damning collection of excerpts from the speeches of "National" leaders. The title page is a clever compilation, but perhaps because of the method of collection, the book does not quite live up to anticipation. But as the book deals with contradictions and begins so well that, perhaps, must be forgiven.

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PUBLISHING OFFICE, "The Labour Organiser"
107 DALE END, BIRMINGHAM, 4. (Tel.: Central 0311)

The Financial Responsibilities of Local Parties

Immediately following the Hastings Conference at which the Party endorsed the Executive proposals for a Victory for Socialism Campaign, one of the features of which was a call upon the Divisional Labour Parties to expend 35/- per month as their contribution to the great advance, we met a Divisional Labour Party Secretary who complained bitterly of the increasing burdens cast upon Divisional Labour Parties. The complaint our friend made was no new one, and perhaps the whole question will bear a brief examination.

In the heyday of the Party's comparative prosperity, i.e., up to 1926, Divisional Labour Parties got away with an annual affiliation to Headquarters of twopence per member with a minimum of 30/-. The overwhelming bulk of D.L.P.'s paid on the minimum. In 1925 the affiliation fees for Labour Parties and Trades Councils totalled £1,378 13s. 0d. And on the payment side of National Headquarters' account is to be found an item, "Paid to Local Parties as grants in aid of agents' salaries," total £4,772 2s. 11d. So much for the "old" position.

In the accounts for 1932 (the latest available) contributions from Divisional Labour Parties reached a total of £5,393 4s. 5d., the grants in aid of agents' salaries having dropped to £2,218 16s. 0d. The income from Divisional Labour Parties here stated does not include contributions to the by-election fund.

This, then, is the whole story as disclosed by the accounts. Except that there is another side to the matter because the income to the Labour Party from Trades Unions in 1925 amounted to £39,563 0s. 6d.; but in 1932 it had dropped to £33,285 6s. 3d.

It will be seen from the latter figures that while there has been a progressive decline in the income from Trades Unions, due, of course, to the prevailing depression, and the operation of the Trades Disputes Act, the National Executive has partially recouped itself by an increase in the income from Local Parties, and a reduction in the amounts paid to them. Can it, however, be denied that accompanying these changes there has been a tremendous growth in the in-

fluence of Local Labour Parties within the Party, and in their power to control its policy and destinies?

Our readers will no doubt recollect the successive steps which have been taken to induce Local Labour Parties to take a larger share of responsibility for the National affairs of the Party. It would be difficult to contend that, apart from the "Victory for Socialism Campaign," the steps taken have had no relation to the growing power and stability of Local Parties. Certainly it can be shown that with the increase of contributions, constitutional changes have come along giving Divisional Labour Parties greater representation and influence at Party Conferences.

It may be interesting to narrate the order in which, as our friend expressed it, "the screw has been put on."

In 1925/26 Divisional Labour Parties shared with the Trades Unions the responsibility for paying double affiliations to the Labour Party for one year only. In the succeeding year Labour Parties and Trades Councils paid £700 0s. 11d., and Trades Unions paid £11,237 8s. 5d. in double affiliation fees. The next year Labour Parties and Trades Councils paid in arrears for the same purpose £25 7s. 9d. and Trades Unions paid £4078 13s. 6d.

In 1928 the contributions from Divisional Labour Parties was increased to threepence per member, with a minimum of £3 instead of 30/-. In 1931 a further increase in affiliation fees was made bringing the amount to that at present, viz., fourpence per member with a minimum of £4. Perhaps one should also comment that the introduction of the National Membership Campaign imposed a further payment on many Parties who had not acted up to the previous rule of paying twopence per year in respect of every member.

The successive reductions which have taken place in the payment of grants in respect of agents' salaries has, it must be admitted, imposed an additional burden on certain Parties, and the process of reduction has been spread over practically the whole of the period we are speaking of.

Our friend laid emphasis on the fact that Divisional Labour Parties also pay "heavily" to the by-election fund. That the by-election fund is

proving a serious burden to numbers of D.L.P.'s cannot be gainsaid, though it has to be remembered that the past year has been an exceptional one in this respect.

The by-election fund was first inaugurated in 1925. Under that scheme the contributions expected from Local Parties were pretty severe, both Divisional and Local Parties being called upon for contributions. The present scheme is a far more equitable one, and to this Trades Unions contribute as well as Constituency Parties, and as a consequence the burden to the latter has been substantially eased.

In this analysis of the events of the past few years we believe we have stated all the facts. The question now is: Is the complaint of our friend, and many others who repeat it, altogether a complaint that should be uttered?

Let us look facts in the face. In 1924, i.e., at the commencement of the period we have covered, Labour's vote was 4,348,379. That vote in the interim has been doubled. Is it fair to assume that in this great advance Local Labour Parties have not reaped something out of the position in increased strength and heightened possibilities? If they have not done so, and we believe they have, it would be a sad reflection. In the same period the Trades Unions have slumped seriously. Is our friend then justified in assuming that the old relationships ought to continue?

Our next point is far more important. As the Party is constituted to-day the Movement in the constituencies is the body and soul of the thing. As our growth in the constituencies develops the constituencies will demand more and more of a share in the control of the Party. And that process has been developing pretty quickly in recent years. Is it, therefore, a bad thing that Divisional Labour Parties should be taking a more serious part in finding the finances of the Party? It will be many years yet before they equal the contributions of the Trades Unions.

All this is said with a full appreciation of the many difficulties in which Divisional Parties find themselves. We are hampered by tradition and the fact that our Party started out in 1918 to make individual membership on a basis of one shilling per year for men and sixpence

per year for women has pursued us ever since. The constituencies must make a bolder bid for finance, and the time will come when even the present penny per week will be deemed insufficient for the purposes of the Party.

It is this bigger vision of the requirements of our Movement that matters. The great call to victory which is embodied in the Victory for Socialism Campaign takes us right out of the field of petty politics and pence minds. Labour must think and act in larger terms, and its great army of supporters must be made to pay their share. We are by no means at the end of the cost that Local Parties will have to bear. Indeed, maybe we are only at the beginning!

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(Signed) W. E. Body, Sec.

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Notes from an Agent's Desk

JACK CUTTER GOES ON STRIKE AND HITS AT CHRISTMAS.

[Our request to "Jack Cutter" to write his usual monthly article this month has met with a refusal. But he says he will write about Christmas. Under the circumstances we have given him his head—with dire results and apologies to our readers.—Ed. "L.O."]

Christmas, vide my T.U.C. desk calendar and an early specimen of the genus carol singer, comes but once a year. An optimistic and persevering wine merchant who persists in sending me expensive catalogues without the slightest encouragement on my part, informs me in his latest effort that when it comes it brings good cheer.

Personally, I regard the whole business of Christmas as a darn nuisance. It upsets people for three weeks beforehand and they cannot come to meetings because of their confounded shopping, which makes them so hard up for a month afterwards that they cannot pay their annual subs just at the very time you need them.

Christmas is a racket, organised by the shopkeepers, newspaper advertising managers, brewers, distillers, poultry farmers and mistletoe growers in a gigantic conspiracy to make the lot of Labour agents even harder than devised by Lucifer when he thought of the job as a kind of specially excruciating punishment for the particularly damned.

I have always a great deal of sympathy with the point of view of the paupers in the famous old folk ballad—you know, the one beginning: "It was Christmas Day in the Workhouse." These men were realists. Not for them the tawdry trappings and the sentimental snufflings of nitwitted tradition. You remember with what blunt candour they rejected their issue of that ghastly concoction called Christmas pudden, and how effectively, if somewhat brusquely, they suggested a suitable means of its disposal?

You call a sub-committee, as instructed, to consider and report on the whys and wherefores of this and that, and one after the other the

members call in to say they can't come that night. "It's so near Christmas" they say, as if that were any reason at all, and they beam with traditional cheer and exude the ordered brand of seasonal goodwill, comporting themselves in such a fat-headed way that one begins to wonder if they are secret readers of the "Daily Mail." And, mind you, they are quite reasonable people all the rest of the year.

Even the editor of the local Labour paper is smitten by the disease. He wants a message for his "Christmas Number," forsooth. "Get one from the candidate, too, old man," says he, "something cheery and full of holly berries and the mistletoe bough." Gercher!

Here is the kind of Christmas message I should like to have written for him—but didn't:

Dear Comrades, — I hope most of you have a merry Christmas, for, in the main, you are a decent and likeable lot of folk and we get a good deal of fun working together in this movement of ours. There are one or two of you, however, who deserve to have severe indigestion after eating your Christmas dinner. There's Mr. Opposition Benchner, for instance, the man who objects to everything on principle. And Mr. Pessimist, whose douches of cold water are regularly sprayed on every progressive scheme. And there's Mr. Ark of the Covenant, who sees in every item of policy a betrayal of Marx and the dead hand of the right: Mr. Long Winded, who counts a meeting barren unless he has spoken six times: Mr. Stickler, who knows procedure better than the chairman: Mr. Midnight Oil, who invariably has a controversial matter to raise under any other business, and Mr. Tactless Chump, who ought to know better. Yours fraternally, Jack Cutter, Agent.

And, in view of the fact that after all I have written a Christmas article, I might as well go the whole hog and write a Christmas carol too in the good old tradition of Scrooge, who began with a grouse just as I did.

JACK CUTTER'S CHRISTMAS CAROL.

Labour agents should look out.

On the Feast of Stephen,
When annual meetings are about
Subs are most uneven.

Brightly shines the agent's hopes

Though the times are cru-el,
He never sits around and mopes,
He really is a jewel.

"Bring me subs and bring me fees
From affiliations.

A murrain on your Christmas trees
And paper decorations."

Therefore, Socialists, take note

While you eat your pudden,
He who makes the agent gloat
Is a bloomin' good 'un.

That'll be about enough of that. I
promise you it won't happen again.

Labour Party Work in London

The Report of the Executive Committee of the London Labour Party for 1932-33, which has just been published, indicates that the Party has extended its activities in several useful new directions. These have included the London Labour Party Lectures, Week-End Schools, a Speakers' Class and the establishment of Research Groups on Housing, Education and Public Health.

The membership paid on for the year at the full rate was 211,405 for 1933 as compared with 208,793 for 1932, an increase of 2,612.

The difficulties of the times have involved the Party in a deficit of income as against expenditure of £250. The Executive has carefully considered the items of expenditure and feels that reductions would impair the efficiency of the Party. It is anxious to avoid reducing necessary expenditure if possible and therefore appeals to friends of the Party to add to the Roll of individual Annual Subscribers and the affiliated membership.

As announced in our last issue, the London Labour Party's Individual Membership Trophy will be awarded for the second time to the Woolwich Labour Party (West Division), whose increase in membership is 1,343, or one *new* member for every 10.81 Labour voters. The two runners-up are Limehouse and N.W. Camberwell.

Party organisation in the area is reviewed. Among the new activities dealt with are the periodical conferences of local Labour Parties dealing with organisation.

Among the associated bodies of the Party whose work is recorded in the Report are the Women's Advisory Committee, the League of Youth Advisory Committee, covering Greater

London, the London Labour Choral Union and the London Labour Party Sports Association.

The Executive has been successful in persuading the L.C.C. Education Committee to reduce the charges for the hire of L.C.C. schools for certain purposes.

The document includes the Report of the London County Council Labour Party. This records the energetic work of the Labour Party on the Council, the principal issue being regarded by the Party as "the so-called economies effected in the various branches of the Council's services."

The Report of the Party on the Council states: "In March, 1934, a great opportunity presents itself to the Party and to the people of London to change the composition of the Council. With adequate work and enthusiasm on the part of the Labour Party in London there is, we believe, a real chance of winning a majority on the world's greatest municipality. This would bring to us vast responsibilities, but they are responsibilities which we are prepared to face and which we believe would be discharged to the lasting benefit of the people of London.

"It is our earnest hope that Labour rule will begin and Municipal 'Reform' rule be ended as a result of this momentous election."

BOURNEMOUTH.

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QUESTIONS ANSWERED HERE

Point of Order: Can the Mover Withdraw?

Question: Dear Mr. Editor, I have got a grievance, and I think perhaps you can help me. In the — Labour Party we recently elected a new Chairman, and this gentleman, a school teacher, seems to fancy himself on points of debate. He is too smart for some of us, and I wonder sometimes if he is right after all. At our last meeting I moved an amendment and wanted to withdraw the same after I heard what was to be said. The Chairman didn't exactly refuse me permission to withdraw, although the seconder was willing, but he put whether or not I should be *allowed* to withdraw as a resolution to the meeting. The result was that several persons objected, and notwithstanding my willingness to withdraw, the amendment was put to the meeting and, of course, heavily beaten, which made me look ridiculous. I want to know if the Chairman was right or wrong in allowing voting upon an amendment that was withdrawn.

Answer: Our correspondent also puts to us another question which relates to rules of debate. It is, however, more convenient to treat the questions separately, and the second question is to be found answered below.

Our correspondent's question raises a point which is frequently overlooked in Labour meetings, viz., that a motion or amendment is *the property of the meeting* and not that of the mover or seconder. The ruling of the Chairman that the meeting must consent to a withdrawal was quite right. Indeed, the authorities hold that even one objector to withdrawal is sufficient to compel the matter being voted upon. We have

known amendments *carried* despite the eagerness of the mover and seconder to run away from the motion they have fathered. A little reflection will show that it is not proper that the expression of a meeting's opinion should be denied because one or two persons have changed their opinion in the course of the debate. A withdrawal to avoid a record of an adverse decision is an old trick in debate, but it does not take place if the Chairman knows his job, and the meeting or a portion of it, feels strongly upon the subject.

We cannot do better than quote Mr. Walter Citrine upon this matter. In "The Labour Chairman," Mr. Citrine says:

It sometimes occurs, after a motion or an amendment has been moved, seconded and debated, that the mover feels that he cannot support it, or that he prefers to withdraw it in favour of some other course which has been moved. He therefore asks the Chairman's permission to withdraw his motion. The Chairman, as a rule, simply asks the seconder of the motion whether he is willing to allow this to be done, and if so, allows the motion to fall.

This is not correct. Once the motion has been proposed and seconded, it becomes the property of the meeting, and cannot be withdrawn without the *consent of the meeting*. Should the previous question have been moved, the motion cannot be withdrawn.

We have seen many errors made in allowing withdrawal without unanimous consent. Sir Erskine May, after pointing out that there must be no dissent to the withdrawal, says:

"A motion which has been withdrawn . . . can be moved again, and for this reason leave to withdraw is frequently refused."

Sir R. Palgrave says: —

"Motions and amendments may be withdrawn, leave being granted without any negative voice."

Clearly this means that if even one member dissents, the proposition must remain. The Chairman asks:

"Is it your wish that this motion be withdrawn?"

If no dissent is expressed, permission is then given.

In cases where an amendment has been moved to an original motion, the Chairman must first ask the mover and seconder of the amendment whether they consent to the withdrawal of the original motion. If they agree, he must ask the meeting whether or not anyone objects to the withdrawal. If any member present objects to this course being adopted, the amendment must stand. It should be remembered, however, that the mover and seconder of any motion have the right to vote against their own proposition if they desire to do so. No application for the withdrawal of a motion or an amendment can be tolerated once the question has been put from the chair and the vote is about to be taken.

Suspending Standing Orders or Order.

Question: Our correspondent continues: There was another muddle at this meeting, and I contend a certain resolution was not properly carried. We have some good Standing Orders in the — Labour Party, and one says that no motion shall be put after 9.30 p.m., any business remaining to be held over till next meeting, or, if urgent, to be dealt with by the E.C. Now we had a speaker that night and somebody moved suspension of Standing Orders. What took place is not denied. Somebody said we ought to take the speaker before other business, when up jumped somebody and said, I move the suspension of Standing Orders, which was carried. At a quarter to ten I drew the Chairman's attention to a resolution just carried, and I claimed the vote taken was out of order. The Chairman ruled me out and said there was no Standing Orders because we had suspended them—all the lot. I don't agree, and this seems funny to me. What do you think about it?

Answer: In the first place we are just left wondering why our corres-

pondent did not raise his point of order till 9.45 p.m., and why he left it till *after* the vote was taken. Apparently our friend didn't like the decision or why endeavour to get it ruled out of order? While we admire this zeal for strict rules of debate we confess to some doubt about the same zeal being displayed had the vote gone the other way.

In this case also the Chairman appears to have the authorities on his side. The motion to suspend Standing Orders was apparently a comprehensive one, and it is clear from our correspondent's account that the suspension of no particular standing order was mooted. We think the Chairman is right in ruling that *all* the Standing Orders were suspended, for no one moved the resumption of them. We think, too, the Chairman's ruling might be supported on the ground that objection was taken too late.

Mr. Walter Citrine has something to say on this question also, and we quote his comments below:

Standing Orders are literally the rules which govern the meeting. Therefore, it is desirable that they should be interfered with as little as possible, but there are occasions when a subject is of such urgency and importance that it is imperative for it to be given precedence. Or it may happen that a subject which is legitimately on the agenda cannot be discussed by the usual method of one speech only per member. Again, it may be found desirable that certain speakers be allowed more time to expound their case than the Standing Orders propose. In all such cases the easiest method of getting over the difficulty is to suspend the Standing Orders.

The Chairman must examine each claim for suspension with great care, and unhesitatingly refuse to accept the suspension in relation to anything that is not absolutely of vast urgency or importance. He should require the member moving the suspension to state the exact Standing Orders (or Order) the latter desires to be suspended. Some speakers simply rise and say: "I move that the Standing Orders be suspended to hear this case." Literally interpreted, this would mean that the whole of the Standing Orders would be suspended. Obviously, the debate would then proceed without any rules at all. This

would be an impossible position. The correct method is for the member, after having decided the Standing Orders he desires suspending, to move: "That Standing Orders Nos. so-and-so and so-and-so be suspended in order to discuss this subject." The member should also be required to state the length of time the proposed suspension shall last.

Speakers' Expenses in Election Return.

Question: I should be glad if in some future issue of the "Labour Organiser" you could give agents more advice as to how speakers' expenses should be dealt with in the election return. I believe it is illegal to pay speakers, but it is hard to believe that the Tories follow this out seeing the army of tub-thumpers they sent into our division. Still, I think it would help agents if you could clear up this matter.

Answer: The question raised by our correspondent is one of some difficulty. It is quite clear that employment of a speaker for payment is an illegal employment inasmuch as speakers are not included in the list of persons who may be legally employed for payment (contained in part one of the first schedule of the Corrupt and Illegal Practices Prevention Act, 1883). In the Hartlepool's Petition it was made clear that the payment of the mere travelling expenses of a speaker at an election meeting was not illegal, though the expense must be included in the election accounts.

It has further always been clear that a candidate can and would extend his hospitality to speakers who came into his division to help him, and it would seem, therefore, that if the candidate paid a speaker's expenses, even including the latter's hotel bill, and the payment was not unreasonable, that no illegality would be committed. It would further seem that the candidate might instruct the agent to pay such items as a part of his personal expenses, though this point is not so clear. What is clear, however, is that in the vast majority of cases the inclusion of speakers' expenses in the candidate's personal expenses would be perfectly legal and safeguard any risk.

However, what our friend apparently desires to know more about is the case where a strenuous contest is

fought and the number of speakers imported into the division make the inclusion of all their expenses in the candidate's return a somewhat undesirable matter.

To be quite frank about it, the authorities at present are against the agent paying speakers' expenses other than the refund of mere travelling expenses. Against this view, however, we believe we may legitimately set up the plea that the Corrupt and Illegal Practices Act authorises "the expenses of holding public meetings." Such expenses are not specified, though we confess that in the prescribed form of return only the expenses for hire of hall are allowed for.

It may be remarked that there has been no recent case upon this subject; though it has been held that the giving of refreshment is only another form of payment, which, put in another way, means that the payment of a speaker's hotel expenses is tantamount to payment for services.

But another important consideration enters into this matter. As stated, no recent case has been decided, and the whole history of election petitions indicates that election judges have been progressively more liberal in their interpretations of the statutes. What is more they have not been unmindful of changes in public opinion or in the times. Now the C.I.P.P.A. was framed in days when election contests were very different matters from to-day; when travelling was limited, and the present methods of fighting were not possible. Both our enemies and ourselves have adopted a method of concentration on by-elections in which numerous speakers are drafted into the division, and we opine that judges would hesitate a good deal before saying that a refund of the expenses of these speakers, including their board and lodging, would be contrary to law.

As somewhat supporting our point of view, let us take the question of the hire and use of telephones. Just as the Act permits "the expenses of holding public meetings," and then seems to limit such expenses (in the prescribed form) to "the hire of rooms," so the Act permits expenses of "messages, postage and telegrams," but limits the items in the return to "postage and telegrams." The telephone, of course, was unthought of as an election essential in 1883, but who would say it is not

an expense on messages, or at any rate a thoroughly legitimate expenditure?

Having thus argued the matter and indicated our view that, provided speakers' expenses are not excessive or colourable, they will not be illegal, the question arises where to return them.

On more than one occasion we ourselves have returned them under the heading of "Public Meetings," chiefly because we believe that they are a legitimate expense as such and might be properly returned there. On the other hand most agents return such expenses under the heading "Miscellaneous," provided that item (which is limited to £200) is not thereby thrown off the mark. At any rate, we are of the opinion that until some decision of the Courts limits the activities of both ourselves and our enemies in this direction, agents need not hesitate to refund to speakers their reasonable out-of-pocket expenses, and to include them in the return in either manner indicated above.

A Poll-Card Query.

Question: A candidate in our municipal elections issued a poll card as follows:—

Take this Card with you to the Polling Station and

MARK YOUR BALLOT PAPER
as under:—

BLUNT	X
HUNT	
LUNT	
SHUNT	

You must not vote for more than TWO Candidates or your Ballot Paper will be spoilt.

I am of the opinion that this card is illegal, for it is a definite instruction to the voter how to vote. It is an instruction and not advice. If an offence has been committed will you please let me know?

Answer: The poll card above illustrated is quite innocuous and in no sense does it appear to us to contravene the law. As a matter of fact, a similarly worded card is widely used by all Parties. What our correspondent has in mind probably, is a case

which was heard some years ago. In this case cards had been issued in the form of ballot papers with a mark opposite the name of the Sitting Member and a statement was subjoined that if the voter marked his ballot paper otherwise than as shown his vote would be lost. A statement of this character is obviously improper, or any other statement calculated to mislead the voter. But even in the case here quoted the card was not held to be a fraudulent contrivance within the Act, because no intention to deceive had been proved. It is doubtful in view of what was said in a later case whether the latter limitation now holds good, provided it can be proved that some person has actually been misled or intimidated by the device used.

SOME FACTS ABOUT THE RUNNING OF A LABOUR MONTHLY.

The "South Leeds Worker."

The ambitions of many Local Labour Parties run in the direction of possessing at some time a local Labour newspaper of some kind or other. Unfortunately many ambitious ventures and many much humbler ones have come to grief, so that the account of how a quite moderate-sized and entirely local journal has been kept going for a series of years may not be unhelpful.

The "South Leeds Worker" commenced publication in 1925, Alderman D. B. Foster being the first editor and founder. Since 1926 Councillor G. Brett, the agent for the division, has been in charge and admiration must be expressed both for his sound editorship and business guidance.

The paper is of the size known as 4pp. crown folio, i.e., there are four pages size 15 in. by 10 in., the sheet, if opened flat, being 15 in. by 20 in. This, though modest, is quite a sizeable and convenient sheet, and handily distributed and read.

Six thousand copies a month are printed and these are delivered by the printer in eleven lots to the respective polling district captains for further distribution among the workers. Some of the distributors have done this work ever since 1925 — a really creditable performance.

The number at present printed is

only sufficient to cover one-third of the division and so the polling district captains arrange to cover one-third of the houses in their areas each month in turn. The agent is naturally anxious for an 18,000 distribution each month, but the effect of trebling the work of the distributors is not to be lightly thought of, especially as the work is done voluntarily. More than one local Labour paper has fallen purely because the work of distribution, lightly thought of in the commencement, has proved too much for the Party machine.

Regarding advertisements, quite a fair amount of success has attended the constant pains in this direction undertaken by Mr. Brett. For instance, there are 26 advertisers in the November issue, and the value of this medium to local advertisers is shown by the fact that most of them have advertised continuously for several years and some of them ever since the commencement.

Advertisement prices are naturally

not so exorbitant as the daily and evening papers. The price of a single inch, single column, three columns to the page, is apparently about 2/9 with a reduction for larger spaces. Front page positions cost a little more and advertisements here bring in about, £2 2s. 0d. a month.

Regarding general finance, the paper is, of course, given away. Advertisements pay the whole cost. Printing costs £6 10s. per month on the present quantity, and during the whole period of its life the "South Leeds Worker" has been run at a profit. This profit has never been less than £16 a year and this year it is probable the profit will reach £28.

We feel sure that these particulars will be of service to many readers and we congratulate Mr. Brett and the South Leeds Divisional Labour Party on possessing a creditable paper and on the wonderful display of self-sacrifice it has entailed to cover so long a period with sound propaganda and financial success.

Slum Clearance

An important circular has been issued by the Labour Party to affiliated organisations on the above subject urging that it is vitally important that every possible step should be taken to make the Labour Government's slum clearance proposals a success and calling on organisations to use the powers of initiative embodied in the 1930 Housing Act. This circular should be studied most carefully and acted upon by every Local Labour Party.

As the permitted procedure may not be widely known we reprint the brief summary given below:—

- (a) It is the duty of the local Medical Officer of Health to report to the Local Authority dwelling houses unfit for human habitation and areas which either should be cleared or dealt with as "improvement areas."
- (b) A Justice of the Peace or four Local Government electors (or a Parish Council in a Rural District) may complain in writing to the Medical Officer of Health regarding Housing Conditions. It is then the duty of the Medical Officer of Health to inspect the houses in question and report to the Local Authority, which in its turn must

take the matter into its consideration.

- (c) A Justice of the Peace or four Local Government electors may make a complaint to the Minister that a Local Authority has failed to exercise its housing powers. The Minister may then hold a public inquiry, and on the results of that inquiry he may declare the Authority in default, and take steps to see that the necessary Houses are built.

Organisations are urged to make careful inquiries as to (a) local needs as regards both slum clearance and improvements; and (b) the Local Authority's proposals for dealing with the situation.

If it is shown that the suggested programme is really inadequate, the organisation should then use the powers given to Local Government electors under the Act.

Local secretaries are asked (a) to inform the Secretary of the Research Department when they take action, sending the fullest information; and (b) to keep the Department informed as to further developments.

We sincerely trust that local organisations will not fail in this important matter.

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SOMETHING ABOUT POSTERS.

Ways and means should be found of providing boards for displaying a double-demy or double-crown poster in supporters' gardens or other prominent positions. The advertising value of the big hoarding, unless the thing is done on a big scale—is sadly over-rated. Ordinary posters are lost and few people read them. People read pictures now and not posters. Something more is wanted than an occasional display of posters—continuity is needed in our advertising methods. Think of the publicity the party and the agents would get if only fifty posters were regularly and systematically displayed all the year round in every constituency. If a uniform size in boards and bills were adopted throughout the country it would pay the party's headquarters to supply smart and effective posters at regular intervals.

Again, it is essential that suitable posters be exhibited at *all* meetings and social functions. Take open-air meetings. The agent should never forget to put up a bill in front of the platform stating that—

THIS IS A.....MEETING
MR.....NOW SPEAKING.

Most passers-by stop to read the notice, and although all of these do not stay to listen to the speeches, a momentary impression is better than no impression at all.
(From "Political Organisation," by J. H. Hill.)

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